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Wednesday, March 5, 1941

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Subject: "LET'S PLAN SOME GARDEN LEFT-OVERS." Information from the Farm Security Administration. U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The lunchroom at Greenwood School in Jefferson County, Alabama has a new kind of wall decoration. Hundreds of jars of canned fruits and vegetables are all lined up like little soldiers along the shelves. They are different shades of red, yellow, green, and brown, and it's fun to watch the children point to something and say "Mmm-mm-m! I betcha that came out of our garden." It probably did.

Today the Farm Security Administration reports to us about the school lunch program of borrower families on three of its Alabama homestead projects. At Greenwood Homesteads, for example, parents have worked out their own surplus foods plan. Or maybe we should call it "surplus garden plan." Anyway, garden left-overs are all gathered and canned and put away for school lunches. When the families have eaten and canned all they need for themselves - and their pantries and cellars are bulging full - they gather the beans and peas that are about to dry up on the vines, the beets and carrots that are going to waste, and the tomatoes and squash that are ready to spoil, and take them to school for canning.

The Homesteaders just started this plan last year and it worked so well they are expanding it this year. They are actually planning left-overs so they will be sure to have plenty of extras for school lunches. And they are working on the garden right now so the children will have some fresh fruits and vegetables before school closes.

Of course, the youngsters love the lunch program. Every day they can hardly wait for noon to get the big plate of hot vegetables, meat, and fruit. As they eat, they get healthier, happier, and wiser. "Wiser," the teachers say, because they

can learn their lessons better. It is easier for them to study and pay attention in class. It is also easier for them to ward off bad colds and sickness, and to keep little "X's" out of the teachers' attendance book. The children learn a lot about good diet too - what foods they should eat, how they should be prepared, and why they should eat a wide variety. They find out where their real "pep and go" come from.

At Mt. Olive Homesteads, a few miles east of Birmingham, parents work on a slightly different school lunch basis because of several handicaps. For example, they have no school lunchroom or kitchen - not even a cookstove - so one of the mothers prepares the food at home and carries the hot pots and kettles a whole mile to the school house. But she says "It's worth it." At Mt. Olive the families not only provide surplus garden vegetables and canned goods, but also fresh eggs, meat, and milk from their farms. The teacher is in charge and the older pupils help serve and clean up. For lack of a regular lunchroom, the children eat at their desks. So if you should drop in at noon someday, you might see little heads bowed over beans and potatoes instead of books and pencils.

Children at the school on the third project - Cahaba Homesteads also near Birmingham - help with the gardening. They work after school and on Saturdays in a big school garden. They dig, plant, and cultivate - all so they can harvest. They eat some of the vegetables fresh, and gather others to can. Right now they are getting ready for the Spring planting so, like at Greenwood, they can have fresh fruits and vegetables to eat before school is out. Theirs is a sort of live-at-school program like their parents' is a sort of live-at-home program.

Besides the beans, peas, lettuce, onions, tomatoes, and cabbage, they may sometime plant peanuts for homemade peanut butter or corn for grinding into cornmeal to make bread and cereal. And maybe the girls will plant some flowers, so they can put fresh bouquets in the lunchroom and classrooms.

The families say a fine thing about their lunch and garden project is that "anybody can do it." It takes time and planning all right, but it's not hard and it's really worth the trouble. Sometimes mothers start the project, sometimes school officials, sometimes a Parent-Teachers' Association, sometimes a church group, and sometimes home management supervisors and extension workers but it's always the parents who really put the plan across.

If there is no lunchroom or kitchen at the school, they suggest that workers may use a classroom or room in a nearby building, or even build an addition to the school house. In the latter case, they may be able to get lumber and materials donated or bought at low cost. To equip the lunchroom or "kitchen corner" in the classroom, they can hold a school lunch "kitchen shower", put on a play or entertainment, have a pie supper or give a party. Or they may ask the pupils to pay a nickel or a dime for lunch - especially those whose parents didn't have much time for helping with the gardening and canning.

Even if there is no equipment and no way to get it, families can still have a school lunch program if they want to. They can have a hot-dish meal. According to this plan, each child brings a little jar of something to be heated - such as string beans, stewed corn, scalloped tomatoes, or some kind of soup. He carries it in a little glass fruit jar or small can with tightly fitting lid. Then at morning recess, or a little later, the teacher or one of the pupils sets the cans in a pan or roaster, adds some water, and puts them on the heating stove to warm. If the school has an oil stove, of course the food may heat faster and fewer children may have to wait for "the second table."

Did you know that nine million children in America do not get enough to eat. It's hard to believe but records show it. There are estimated to be 21,000,000 children in the United States altogether, between the ages of five and thirteen, and millions of them are underfed. The Surplus Marketing Administration provides several million with hot noon lunches through its surplus foods program, but others must do without or be aided by parents, teachers, or community groups.

The Farm Security Administration believes many could be given at least one square meal a day through a home garden and canning project such as you've heard about today. If you think so too, perhaps you would like to help start one in your own locality.

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